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28th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 11 October 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Obadi (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call on the first speaker on our list this morning, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Swaziland, His Excellency Mr. Arthur R.V. Khoza.

Mr. Khoza (Swaziland): I bring with me the warmest greetings and good wishes of His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland, to all our friends and fellow Members of the United Nations.

Swaziland extends its congratulations to Mr. Freitas do Amaral on his election to the presidency of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, and commends his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, for his leadership and direction as President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session. The Kingdom of Swaziland would also like to take this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to our distinguished Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his relentless efforts in directing the affairs of our vast Organization, and whose skill and diplomacy have contributed so much to our achievements over the past twelve months.

Each year since 1945 the General Assembly has provided us with a chance to reflect on our achievements, as well as on our failures over the preceding twelve months; the goals we have met and others which, for a variety reasons, have been missed. This process of self-assessment is an essential element of any organization; and for the United Nations there is a special significance to our deliberations this year as we mark fifty years of its existence.

Perhaps the most important development of the last five decades has been the emergence of a new world order, in both political and economic terms, brought about by the transformation of many parts of the world through new-found freedom and independence from both colonial domination and oppressive ideologies.

Hopes continue to be raised that this new world order would result in a strengthened commitment to achieve common development objectives on a truly global basis. Never before have the nations of the world been given this opportunity to work together, with collective responsibility, towards achieving real global security — social, economic and political — for all our peoples.

There have undoubtedly been many encouraging signs that we are taking our responsibilities towards one another seriously, but we remain a long way behind in realizing the ambitions of those ideals on which the United Nations was established.

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The foundations of our Organization were built on the ruins of a world torn apart by war. "Never again" was the cry of all mankind, and our structures and principles were focused on the equal development of all nations, and on the prevention of the occurrences of such destruction ever again.

And yet, with all the commitment and promises, it seems that only very recently have we seen any progress towards global peace in this century. Certainly, the end of the cold war did not bring the world-wide stability envisaged by all of us at that time. Events such as the Gulf War, the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda have shaken our belief that human beings could ever live peacefully, side by side, with one another.

Recent developments have shown, however, that there is a new mood abroad — one that is based on a spirit of reconciliation and a desire for peace that gives us all reason for hope that real progress towards lasting global stability may be possible after all. Swaziland recognizes the role of the United Nations in bringing about this new climate of promise, and our Organization deserves great credit in its continuing commitment to this noble aim.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joins the rest of the responsible world in welcoming the recent signing of the agreement with a view to the extension of autonomy to the Palestinian people in the West Bank. This latest agreement confirms the commitment of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to a lasting settlement of the problem that has hung like a dark cloud over the Middle East for so long. We congratulate all who have been involved in the process leading to the agreement, but most of all, we applaud the spirit of reconciliation of the leaders and both peoples and their commitment to peace. We appeal to all in the Middle East region to embrace the same spirit so that future generations will never have to experience the instability and uncertainty of the past.

There are encouraging signs, too, evident in recent developments with regard to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Last month the world witnessed the first steps towards the prospect of a settlement in the Balkans. The Kingdom of Swaziland prays that the momentum will continue until a solution may be found that is acceptable to all in that troubled area. Swaziland welcomes the recent initiative leading to the signing of an agreement in Washington and agrees that the first priority, now, must be to ensure a lasting cease-fire and to create an atmosphere in which the people who have suffered so much in recent years may at last begin to bring some order into their broken lives.

The past twelve months have seen major and welcome progress in a number of troubled areas on our own continent of Africa, while other regrettable situations have surfaced to threaten the stability of the continent as a whole.

Clearly, the commitment of all African countries to the establishment by the Organization of African Unity of a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts is central to Africa's efforts in accepting responsibility for its own problems. Swaziland strongly supports this initiative and joins its brother African States in calling for the support of the United Nations in this important enterprise.

Swaziland has been especially heartened by the developments towards a lasting settlement in Angola, engineered to a large degree by the efforts of our United Nations Special Envoy. The signing of the Lusaka peace accord has brought real hope that the two sides to the conflict are now committed to peace and that the Angolan people will now be given the chance to make a new start in a country that has the potential to play such a vital role in the development of the subregion as a whole. The Kingdom of Swaziland stands ready to support and to encourage the development of Angola and its people.

Swaziland commends the efforts made by the international community and the neighbouring countries of Rwanda and Burundi in bringing about an atmosphere of relative calm to the two countries after a time of great suffering and hardship.

Of particular note has been the role of those countries playing host to so many refugees from the conflicts in the area. Swaziland knows full well — and with recent firsthand experience — the problems associated with such a task. It is an obligation to one's fellow human beings to offer refuge in times of conflict, but however willing a country may be to welcome refugees from conflict and strife, the strain on the host country's resources may be too great for them to cope with alone, and outside help is absolutely critical. The role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is essential in this regard, and we commend the work of that Office wherever it is needed.

In the course of the 50 years of its operation, our Organization has learnt many valuable lessons, including

the realization that we must adapt to changing circumstances and to the varying needs of all our Members. The challenges facing us have grown and spread into areas on a scale perhaps not imagined by our founders — challenges such as international security and peace-keeping, the promotion of justice and democracy, and the fight against economic and social inequalities among the Members of our family of nations.

And as the roles of the United Nations expand and develop, so should our capacity to undertake them. Reform and adaptability are the key imperatives for us as we approach the new millennium, and in this spirit, we welcome the new agendas for peace and development which have been initiated under the guidance of our Secretary-General.

These initiatives, which are at the heart of what we are trying to achieve here, create particular obligations for all our Members and for the Organization itself: we all have a responsibility to demonstrate real commitment towards the principles we all have accepted. Thus, our calls for extended United Nations peace-keeping must be supported by full and timely contributions to the relevant budget by all countries, and by a commitment to global peace, which has clearly been lacking in many areas of the world.

This commitment embraces the issue that has posed possibly the greatest threat to global security in the second half of this century: that of containing the spread of nuclear weapons and, ultimately, achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In this context, Swaziland enthusiastically supported, earlier this year, the application to extend indefinitely the Treaty on nuclear non-proliferation, and we look forward to a successful conclusion to the negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

Swaziland is confident that the Secretariat of the United Nations, under the wise and able leadership of His Excellency the Secretary-General, is all too aware of its own responsibilities to adapt and reform elements of the Organization's structures, in line with the wishes of its Members and with regard to achieving efficiency, adaptability and full representation of the global community in order to meet its requirements.

Certainly, we all must feel represented in the key decision-making bodies of the Organization, and Swaziland therefore supports the proposals aimed, in the first place, at making the Security Council a more credible body by introducing wider representation among the permanent members.

The principle of full representation within the United Nations is an extension of the founding principle of universality — to ensure, as much as possible, that all peoples of the world feel that they are represented in the one truly global Organization with the resources and influence to effect developments for the good of mankind.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to have a strong and happy partnership with a country whose people believe that they are denied the opportunity to make their contribution to the rest of the world through the agencies of our Organization, and who maintain that they are excluded from the processes of international decision-making, to which they have a right to contribute. The Republic of China and its 21 million people have shown themselves to be committed to global peace and development, and ready to share with the rest of the world their knowledge, expertise and resources.

In the fiftieth year of the existence of United Nations, and as we celebrate the historic signing of our Charter, it is surely fitting that we live up to our founders' belief that the credibility of our Organization is dependent on the principle that all mankind is represented here. The declaration by a people that it believes itself to be denied representation is surely incentive enough for us to at least consider the case, whatever the outcome. The Republic of China, as one of the original signatories, believes that its appeal deserves to be heard. Swaziland therefore encourages the growing support for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to look into the issue of the renewal of membership of the United Nations for the Republic of China.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has welcomed the far-sighted Agenda for Development, including the Africa-specific development initiatives for the 1990s, which contain the Organization's operational priorities in the area of economic and social development, and aims to ensure sustainable growth for our economies. As we approach the mid-term review of the continent's development plan, it is clear that we still lag far behind the other regions of the world in terms of achieving our development targets.

Swaziland has been conscientious in attending the recent round of important United Nations summit

conferences, which have focused on key social and economic development issues, including those on the environment and development, on population and development, and this year's social summit and Conference on Women. In each case, we have committed ourselves to the plans of action and are doing our best to implement the recommendations.

A side effect of these meetings was that once again they highlighted our continent's limitations. While the countries of Africa recognize our responsibilities to our own people, it is clear that our resources, technical knowledge and all-round expertise do not yet allow us to progress as fast as we would like. Undoubtedly, we will continue to require the support and understanding of the developed world if we are ever to rid ourselves of dependency on outside assistance, and, certainly, the United Nations has a major role to play in the process.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has not been standing still in its own efforts to promote economic measures aimed at improving the living standards of its people. As is our custom, we have consulted directly with the entire nation to give the Swazi people themselves the opportunity to determine priorities for their economic and social development. The focus of our people's concerns has been on much of what has been discussed at the recent United Nations conferences, and there is a direct parallel between the recommendations of the various Summits and those of our own consultation process. The value of this national exercise, in a United Nations context, is that it confirms support for what the Organization is doing at the level of those who matter most.

Included among the issues raised in our national economic exercise were concern over the continuing drought and the realization that any plans we may have to improve our economic performance will still depend to a large extent on the inconsistencies of nature, unless we can offset the effects of poor rainfall by large capital projects to harness our water resources.

An increase in cross-border illegal traffic in drugs and weapons continues to present a threat to our socio-economic stability, and as a sign of our commitment to overcome this growing danger the Kingdom of Swaziland and the Republic of South Africa recently signed a joint agreement to work together to combat cross-border crime. It is clear, however, that what is needed is international support to overcome what is certainly an international menace.

The Swazi nation has confirmed the importance of increasing environmental awareness amongst our people, and the need to protect our natural heritage is recognized as a priority target. Land usage and agricultural diversification are important elements of this vital issue and we will need to acquire technical support to achieve improvement.

Another key element of the nation's concerns is centred on the role of women. Swazi women are identified as the backbone of the economy and it has been recommended that steps be taken to bring the legal rights of our women onto an equal basis with those of our men.

Once more, the traditions and culture of our Kingdom have been reaffirmed as the main contributing cause of our stability and peace. Our national identity is important to us — it is, after all, what makes us unique — and Swaziland feels strongly that there should be recognition of and respect for each country's distinctiveness in the way we each approach an issue and in the solutions we find to our own problems.

As the world's leaders gather here later this month to reaffirm our collective commitment to our founding Charter, let our fiftieth anniversary celebration also signal a new start for our Organization, a new beginning in which we will address the challenges to global security and development with a fresh sense of equal responsibility and duty and with new structures in place to achieve our united goal of improving the world we live in for all our peoples. The Kingdom of Swaziland confirms its own commitment to our founding Charter and declares its pride in the Organization in which the hopes of all mankind are placed. May God bless these proceedings with the success they deserve.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. Clement Rohee.

Mr. Rohee (Guyana): In another two weeks we will be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization. We shall do so with much ceremony. I would hope, however, that we will go beyond the ceremonial to take the opportunity which the occasion provides us to reflect further on the role of the Organization and on the ways and means by which its performance can be enhanced to serve better the needs of its Members in the coming twenty-first century.

We offer Mr. Freitas do Amaral our warmest congratulations on his election. We are confident that, with his demonstrated ability and skills, he will advance us even further in our task of reforming and restructuring the Organization so that it may successfully confront the challenges which the post-cold-war era has brought. He may be sure that we will fully cooperate with him to make the deliberations of the fiftieth session of this Assembly as constructive as possible.

My Government is grateful to the outgoing President of the Assembly, Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for the initiatives which he took during his term of office to improve the functioning of the institution at this critical time of its existence.

We would also wish to say a special word of appreciation to the distinguished Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and his staff for their continuing devotion to the servicing of our many requirements. Their support for our efforts will undoubtedly guarantee our ultimate success.

It is vitally important that the dynamism and effectiveness of the United Nations be increased if it is adequately to discharge its many tasks. Since the Organization was founded almost five decades ago, the world has changed considerably and international problems have become much more complex. The United Nations today bears a heavier load of responsibility than ever before. Ironically, at the same time, it is saddled with a deepening financial crisis which makes its effectiveness and its very future highly uncertain. This situation cannot continue without adverse consequences for the world community.

The expanding nature of many peace-keeping operations not only places an added financial strain on the finances of the United Nations, but is especially burdensome for small developing countries, such as mine, which are finding it increasingly difficult to fulfil our financial obligations to the Organization. Support for these operations represents a continuing drain on our limited resources and hampers our own efforts at development. Yet as conflicts multiply the United Nations will be called upon to mount more operations to keep the peace.

Given the urgency of these demands, we have no choice but to try and meet them. The time has therefore come for us to put the financing of these undertakings on a more reliable footing. We urge all States, especially the major defaulting countries, to honour fully their obligations to the Organization.

It must be a matter of growing concern to the international community that the peace and prosperity expected in the aftermath of the cold war have not materialized. The world continues to face some of the worst threats to international stability. Violent conflicts arising from resurgent nationalisms and religious intolerance between and within States have proliferated. The unresolved situations in Afghanistan, Rwanda, parts of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia have caused severe loss of life and destruction to property and have given rise to humanitarian crises of immense proportions.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains uncertain. The suffering of the Bosnian people, the total disregard for the safe havens and the constant threat to the international peace-keeping force demands that the international community take effective measures to end this senseless conflict. We welcome the prospects of a peaceful settlement which have resulted from the latest diplomatic initiative. With the international Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia now established, we hope that those responsible for the atrocities committed against the Bosnian people will be brought to trial.

We are equally concerned with the situation in Cyprus which, despite the efforts of the Secretary-General, appears to be worsening. There are reports of escalating tensions. We urge both sides to the dispute to respond urgently to his call for a negotiated solution which would preserve the island's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Although the Middle East continues to be volatile, we have reason today to believe that a comprehensive peace can be a reality in the not-too-distant future. The accords already signed between Israel and the Palestinians on the one hand and Israel and Jordan on the other show a willingness to reach a just and lasting solution. These achievements should serve as a catalyst for new initiatives. Many issues such as the refugee problem, security arrangements and borders, fundamental to the Palestine question, remain to be settled. The recent high-level negotiations between the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of Palestine must be considered a positive development. We hope that all remaining difficulties can be resolved in good faith by both sides with the help of this Organization and the international community.

In our own region we are pleased to see that peace and stability have been restored to a large degree in Haiti. Much has been accomplished since the return of the democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in October 1994. We note in particular the practical steps taken by the Government of Haiti to organize free and fair legislative elections, as called for in Security Council resolution 940 (1994). The first of these elections has shown that more has to be done in terms of establishing an effective electoral machinery. The role of the International Civilian Mission and the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) in assisting the Haitian authorities to reinforce democracy remains crucial. The sustained commitment of the international community is indispensable to the prospects for long-term progress in Haiti. My Government is ready to provide whatever assistance it can to achieve this goal.

Today more than ever, the people of the world are making the United Nations the repository of their hopes. The Organization must therefore do its utmost to satisfy these expanded expectations. It must undertake whatever institutional reforms are necessary for adapting itself to the new international context. The urgency of our agenda makes it imperative for us to conclude as early as possible the work under way in the many Working Groups to secure the rationalization of our agenda, as well as the reform of the major organs of the United Nations. These reforms, which we believe to be essential and urgent, must be carried out with transparency and on a consensual basis. They must be realistic and be aimed at increasing efficiency. Above all, they must be in full accordance with the democratic purposes and principles of the Charter.

In so far as the reform of the Security Council is concerned, my Government supports an appropriate increase in membership. Such an increase should take account of the size of the current membership of the Organization and be reflective of the principle of equitable geographical representation. The discussions in the Working Group that was set up in accordance with resolution 48/26 have produced several interesting proposals for reform. These should now be more closely examined and evaluated to determine their feasibility. It is possible, we believe, to find an arrangement that would respond satisfactorily to the need for enhancing the Council's capacity to preserve international peace and security in the post-cold-war era.

A major responsibility of any reformed Council should be to give further impetus to the disarmament process. The decision taken by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to extend the agreement indefinitely reflects the commitment of all parties involved to work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. The extension of the Treaty, however, is not an end in itself. It must be followed by further steps towards complete nuclear disarmament, the dissemination of nuclear know-how for peaceful purposes, adequate security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones. Especially important is the need to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty in order to preclude nuclear-weapon States from undertaking further hazardous experiments. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to proceed as expeditiously as possible to the elaboration of a universal and effective treaty within a fixed time frame.

The nuclear threat, as well as other hazards to which we are exposed, must make us all actually aware of our obligation to protect our fragile environment. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, we have made some progress in a number of areas with regard to the implementation of Agenda 21. We have seen the coming into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as the holding in Barbados of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action. Much more, however, remains to be done if we are adequately to honour the commitments made in Rio.

The terrible destruction inflicted recently by powerful hurricanes on several sister States in the Caribbean Community shows how vulnerable small States are to environmental disasters. Only two months ago my own country suffered major ecological damage as a result of severe leakages from the tailings pond dam at the Omai Gold Mines in the Essequibo region, causing some 1.2 million cubic metres of cyanide slurry to be discharged into the environment. Aquatic life in the river was endangered, while the inhabitants of nearby villages were exposed to serious health hazards. Fortunately, the Government of Guyana was able, with the assistance of friendly Governments and agencies of the United Nations system, to contain the danger. These disasters, both natural and man-made, point to the need for urgent international action to protect small countries such as ours.

Yet, three years after the Rio Conference, the commitments to provide financial resources to implement Agenda 21 remain largely on paper. The target of 0.7 per cent of official development assistance is still to be realized. New resources have simply not been available to undertake some of the programmes specified in the Agenda. Nor have we witnessed any significant transfer of suitable technology to developing countries. While the developing countries are ready to discharge their obligations, developed countries balk at making their contribution. The global partnership, which was so highly advocated and praised at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, is yet to be formed.

We are nevertheless encouraged by the adoption last August of the Draft Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. We hope that this Agreement, which will be opened for signature on 4 December 1995, will ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the living resources of the high seas identified in Agenda 21. This Agreement and the larger United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which came into force in November 1994, are important to the sustainable development of the fishing industry in small States such as ours. We urge their full observance and implementation.

Overall economic development remains the single most important challenge facing Member States and, consequently, the United Nations. At various conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development, which was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, last March, we have repeatedly expressed our political will to address our diverse economic and social problems. We came away from Copenhagen ready to act, but we remain uncertain as to the way forward. Now that the Beijing Conference on women is behind us, the international community needs to summon even greater determination if it is to translate into action the bold decisions we have taken in this series of important summit meetings. These decisions should now be consolidated, and specific machinery set up for their implementation. It would indeed be a great pity if the painfully negotiated results of these high-level deliberations were left to evaporate.

The great divide between rich and poor, both among and within nations, must be considered a threat to world peace. The plight of developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries, compels urgent action. The problems of development, or rather of underdevelopment, can no longer be dealt with adequately on an ad hoc and piecemeal basis or through questionable structural-adjustment measures. What is required is fundamental reform of the international economic system, which continues to marginalize developing countries into a position of perpetual dependence. It is necessary to define new strategies and to agree on new modalities to reverse the present inequities in international economic relations.

The developing countries are willing to do their part in providing an environment favourable to growth. However, they urgently need significant debt relief, greater financial investment flows, the transfer of appropriate technology, the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers and just remuneration for commodities and raw materials. These are not new prescriptions; they are generally known to be essential for development. Thus far, however, developed countries have evinced notable reluctance to follow them, preferring instead to dispense small amounts of bilateral aid. Most of them have now further reduced this limited assistance. The root problems therefore remain unresolved.

The signing, in Marrakesh in 1994, of the Uruguay Round agreements has provided some hope that the playing-field for international trade will be levelled to induce the participation of developing countries. The recently created World Trade Organization, if properly oriented, may be able to provide a rule-based system that could encourage such participation. There is much to be said for the introduction of predictability into international economic relations, and we should therefore work to ensure that it is provided in whatever agreements we reach. The "Agenda for Development", which we are in the process of elaborating, must embody the rights and obligations accepted by the parties.

In this context, Guyana attaches great importance to the conclusion of work on the Agenda. We view the Agenda as an overarching framework for international cooperation for development. We are therefore concerned that, while we work to establish the framework, we should also secure the necessary commitment of resources for effective implementation. In this regard, we believe that South-South cooperation should be considered as an integral and important element of international cooperation for development. International support for greater South-South cooperation cannot but enhance the prospects for world development, thereby increasing the potentialities of interdependence and partnership.

Economic growth cannot be sustained for long unless each individual citizen and each individual community has a stake in that growth and is empowered to take an active part in the development process. Moreover, economic growth would be meaningless if it were not equitably distributed. A society cannot find fulfilment in growth. Indeed, the development process itself is severely hampered if a society does not take adequate care of its vulnerable groups: women, children, ethnic minorities, the handicapped and the homeless. Development must therefore have a social dimension.

Conscious of this need, the President of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. Cheddi Jagan, has advanced the concept of a new global human order. An essential feature of this order would be the consensus that has now emerged in respect of development and governance, the role of the State and the market and sustainable environmentalism. While this consensus is to be welcomed, it is attended by new social, economic and political problems which will effectively prevent it from taking us forward. The solution of these problems calls for a new global commitment to human ideals and universal human development. In his own address to the Assembly, President Jagan will expand on this proposal with a view to securing an appropriate declaration on a new global order to which all States can subscribe.

As I said at the outset of my statement, we must not be content with merely celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The critical situation in which the world now finds itself demands from us a supreme effort to make full use of the opportunities which this historical conjuncture offers. The possibilities of interdependence and international cooperation have never been greater. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to grasp the chance we now have for creating a truly just and humane society of nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands, His Excellency Mr. Danny Philip.

Mr. Philip (Solomon Islands): It is indeed fitting that this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly is being presided over by Mr. Freitas do Amara of Portugal, a distinguished teacher of law, an experienced parliamentarian, and the founder of one of the major political parties that helped to return vibrant democracy to his homeland. He will meet the challenges of this office with the intellect and skill that have marked his service to his country and region.

His Excellency, Mr. Amara Essy, who presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, has my warmest appreciation of his leadership through a complex agenda.

I salute the Secretary-General as well as the women and men of the Secretariat, the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations for their extraordinary work during this difficult time in the Organization's history.

I embrace the representatives of Palau, the newest Member State — our sister in the South Pacific region.

We of Solomon Islands, a politically stable democracy, live in peace, but we have known the cruelty and havoc of modern war. Not only did the Battle of Guadalcanal in the Second World War inflict damage on our natural environment, leaving behind untold numbers of dangerous armaments, but it caused adverse effects on human and economic development as well. We number less than 400,000 people of diverse ethnic origins, speak some 87 distinct languages in various dialects, and live together on hundreds of islands spread over 1600 square kilometres of ocean. We live in a part of the world of exquisite beauty with a delicate marine and forest ecology that is critical to our well-being and survival.

From the perspective of my country, peace and development are inextricably linked. The Agenda for Development and the Agenda for Peace make this as clear as the brilliant and pollution-free waters of our sun-drenched lagoons. In his latest report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General observed that development:

> "the foremost and most far-reaching task of our time ... must be seen in its many dimensions — in the contexts of peace, the economy, environmental protection, social justice and democracy". *(A/50/1, para. 182)*

Each is critical for development, but without peace the other dimensions shrink like characters in stories for children.

We applaud the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the Agenda for Peace. The development of a framework for coordinating the planning and

implementation of complex field operations is welcome. In its efforts to broker peace, the United Nations has wrestled with seemingly intractable problems. Solomon Islands, one of the least developed countries, living in peace, gladly contributes its financial share to peace-keeping and supports initiatives to protect United Nations personnel and to aid civilian populations.

Yet, ethnic strife and armed conflict rage in many places with suffering and devastation beyond comprehension. The violation of human rights continues. Poverty saps the creativity and vitality of thousands of millions. Vast numbers of children, especially female children, do not have their basic needs met and many do not survive infancy or early childhood. Solomon Islands, which reaffirms its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, applauds the work of the United Nations Children's Fund. Minimal education, illiteracy, labouring in unspeakable conditions, prostitution and life on the streets are the conditions of many children. The mass media with an educational purpose have a powerful role in changing all of this as Solomon Islanders living in communities separated by the sea have learned. Moreover, many of the world's women continue to face serious economic and social discrimination as the 1995 *Human Development Report* to the United Nations Development Programme demonstrates. The education of women in Solomon Islands is critical to them, their children, their families and the nation. Without it, sustainable development and the levelling of population growth are unattainable goals.

Solomon Islands applauds the steps taken by the United States of America and the Russian Federation to reduce their nuclear arsenals in accordance with Start I, on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. We look forward to agreement on and implementation of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (Start II).

Solomon Islands and its sister States in the Pacific region fearfully watch the ominous nuclear-weapons tests of France and the People's Republic of China. We especially deplore the fact that France is conducting them in the South Pacific with its fragile marine ecology essential to the lives of island peoples. Recent reports in the French media indicate that the potential danger of these tests is far greater than we have been led to believe. The threats to people, animals and plants — even the genetic foundations of life — are terribly real. Do we need additional evidence of this after Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why are more nuclear tests really required? How valid is the concept of nuclear deterrence now? If, as France claims, nuclear-weapons explosions on Mururoa Atoll and Fangataufa Atoll in French Polynesia are so safe, why not set them off in the soil of the mother country? Its presence in Polynesia and New Caledonia makes France our neighbour in the Pacific where a post-cold-war redefinition of the region is well under way. Do good neighbours endanger the environment that sustains them? Are we not gambling away the future of humankind at the nuclear-weapons dice table? To the nuclear-threshold States, these tests send the wrong signal. The Pacific is certainly the wrong place; now, today, is the wrong time; and for international cooperation, this is the wrong policy.

Global warming, as the intergovernmental climate-change experts are now confirming, continues. The consequences for the small island States are most serious, including the potential impact of sea-level rise. They threaten our agricultural and fish production, thereby endangering our economy and undermining our ability to develop. Clearly, this global problem requires a global solution, but the industrial countries must take the lead if joint solutions are to be successfully implemented.

Solomon Islands is contributing to the quest for international peace and security in a number of ways. Towards disarmament, we have ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and we took an active part in the NPT Review and Extension Conference, joining in the consensus to extend the NPT indefinitely. We ratified the Treaty of Rarotonga establishing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. Establishing nuclear-free zones is an important initiative towards creating a non-proliferation regime in cooperation with other States. Solomon Islands, along with others, made two submissions to the International Court of Justice on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, a matter now before the Court.

Solomon Islands is participating in the process for the completion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty by September 1996. We believe that a comprehensive test-ban treaty is the fulcrum upon which nuclear disarmament will be raised from dream to reality. Ultimately, disarmament is a question of courage and overcoming fear. It begins within, and its achievement must come from within as well — inside them and us, inside you and me.

As for environmental issues, Solomon Islands is a State party to the United Nations Framework Convention

on Climate Change and fully supports the Berlin mandate, which includes the Alliance of Small Island States protocol. With so much of our present and future economy based on our forests and marine life, we embrace the Convention on Biological Diversity, which Solomon Islands acceded to this year, the Barbados Programme of Action, the Nouméa Convention, and the International Coral Reef Initiative. We support a global programme of action to protect the marine environment from land-based activities. Concerned about the shipment and importation of hazardous and radioactive wastes in the South Pacific region, Solomon Islands endorses the Waigani Convention recently adopted at the twenty-sixth South Pacific Forum, held in Papua New Guinea, and calls for the rehabilitation of former nuclear-weapon test sites and assistance to the peoples who were forced from those places.

We live in a world of disturbing, often cruel, contrasts. These, sustainable development has to address. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General states that

> "development at its core must be about improvement of human well-being, the removal of poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance, ensuring productive employment and the satisfaction of priority needs of all people in a way that can be sustained over future generations; ... the emerging consensus on the priority and dimensions of development should find expression in a new framework for international cooperation". *(A/50/1, para. 182)*

Solomon Islands views this emerging consensus as the beginning of a new diplomacy that puts people at the heart of development. The new diplomacy should work vigorously to implement the programmes of action crafted at the World Summit for Children, the Earth Summit, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Fourth World Conference on Women. After Habitat II, in Istanbul next year, we do not require more large conferences, for the time being at least. Rather, we need international will and partnership, political commitment, and thoughtful, decisive action to ensure that these programmes of action are implemented.

As the Declaration of Barbados affirms,

> "Small island developing nations are particularly vulnerable to natural as well as environmental disasters and have a limited capacity to respond to and recover from such disasters." *(A/CONF.167/9, annex I, part one, section III, para. 1)*

Limited in size and with vulnerable economies, they must depend on a narrow resource base and upon international trade, without the means to influence its terms. Solomon Islands and the other small island developing States require international partnership and cooperation to achieve and maintain sustainable development.

The new diplomacy based on people-centred development has at its heart a spiritual dimension which embraces the ideals of democracy, tolerance, peaceful coexistence, justice and the rights of persons and peoples. It cares for the environment and rejects greed and intolerance. This new diplomacy will be a reflection of an agenda for democracy and tolerance, which Solomon Islands believes should be formulated to complete the triad of agendas. Such an agenda ought to be a basis for reforming the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular. For Security Council reform to work, it must put people at the centre instead of a dominating nation, group of nations or region.

Committed to democracy and tolerance, Solomon Islands calls for renewed consideration of the exceptional situation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the international context, on the basis of the principle of universality and in accordance with the established model of parallel representation of divided countries at the United Nations. The Republic of China's standing as the fifteenth largest trading nation in the world, with the twentieth highest gross national product and the largest foreign-exchange holdings, its continuing assistance to many developing countries and its efforts to strengthen international economic cooperation are obvious and cannot be ignored by the world's highest forum. In addition, the Republic of China's contribution to world peace and its unfailing support of United Nations activities are undeniable evidence of its qualifications to receive proper consideration for having a seat at the United Nations. Solomon Islands therefore calls for a renewed focus on the issue of readmitting the Republic of China as a Member of the United Nations.

Solomon Islands believes in a United Nations that calls for tolerance and works to practise it, a United Nations that promotes the values of diversity, tolerance, pluralism, peace, justice, solidarity and responsibility towards others and unknown future generations. Here, differences in race, religion, language and political

doctrine are not obstacles, but challenges to understanding, compassion, insight and patience.

The only hope for humanity is world peace, to be achieved by a change in attitude from one of "mine and my world" to one of "we and our world".

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, His Excellency Mr. Jacques Sylla.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair

Mr. Sylla (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): I must begin my statement by echoing the words of previous speakers who have congratulated Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral on his election by acclamation to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

On my own behalf and on behalf of the delegation of Madagascar, which I have the honour to head, I have pleasure in saying that we rely greatly on his experience and wisdom in ensuring that our work will be crowned with success at the conclusion of our debates. Whilst assuring him of the cooperation and support of my delegation, I would also like to congratulate the other officers of the Assembly.

It gives me particular pleasure to pay tribute to our colleague, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Mr. Freitas do Amaral's distinguished predecessor, for the enthusiasm and dynamism he demonstrated in the service of the General Assembly, which under his presidency carried out its mandate well and always to the satisfaction of countries like my own.

Lastly, may I express our appreciation for the efforts made by the Secretariat to ensure the efficient organization of our work, under the competent leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros-Boutros Ghali.

Since our current session coincides with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Charter, it goes without saying that, as the Secretary-General stressed in his report on the work of the Organization, it is an occasion not only to take stock of the first half-century of our Organization and to prepare for the second, but also to seek ways to keep up the momentum of the first years of the decade in world affairs.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a true symbol of the cold war, history has witnessed a series of events that strengthen confidence in the principles and agreements enshrined in the Charter: the independence of Namibia; the formation of the first democratic multiracial Government in South Africa; the holding of democratic elections marking the end of a long period of civil strife in Mozambique and one-party rule in Malawi; the promising steps taken by several southern African countries towards reconstruction; the process of reconciliation in the Middle East, recently added to by the agreement — welcomed by Madagascar, along with all other peace-loving nations — extending autonomy in the West Bank; and, lastly, certain encouraging signs with regard to the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

Paradoxically, however, the end of the era of ideological confrontations, while accelerating the integration of world society, has also promoted an increase in conflicts, sources of outbursts of violence and savagery, resulting not only from conflicts between States, but also, unfortunately, from ethnic, civil, religious and other deep-rooted causes within a collapsing State or States. This trend, one of the most marked of the post-war period, seems to be growing, in the context of an international community that is powerless, disarmed and, above all, disillusioned.

As regards Africa, to which Madagascar belongs, I refer in this regard to the genocide in Rwanda, whose impact is still felt by international public opinion; the continuation of civil war in Liberia, in Sudan and Angola; and the spiral of violence and violations of human rights in Gambia, one of the oldest democracies in West Africa, following a *coup d'état*.

Other conflicts still continue in Europe and elsewhere.

At the risk of offending some, I must say that most, if not all, of these hotbeds are fuelled in particular by sales of illicit weapons — I should rather, say "authorized sales of weapons". Their proliferation shows the ineffectiveness of the relevant international conventions and of the measures enacted by the international community. They also run counter to the efforts made to reduce worldwide expenditures on armaments since 1987 in order to obtain the peace dividend.

International public opinion was also deeply shocked by the *coup d'état* carried out by mercenaries against the

Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. Madagascar strongly condemned that putsch, and congratulates France on the happy outcome of Operation Azalea to re-establish institutional legality in the Comoros.

The disillusionment that I have described, disillusionment bordering on hopelessness, has other aspects which are even more threatening to the world's security. Indeed, both in the North and in the South we are witnessing an upsurge of intolerance, of xenophobia — in brief, of fear or the rejection of difference, of all differences. These feelings are exacerbated by individual and collective frustrations born of poverty, of marginalization and of social injustice. This picture is complemented by environmental degradation, a sluggish economy, the depletion of natural resources, the disintegration of the social fabric, the spread of drug use, international terrorism, pandemics, natural disasters, unemployment and famine. To sum up, there is a whole range of global threats which are no longer confined within national borders.

It would be a truism to assert that solving these problems calls for us to be farsighted, to step back so as to get a global view and go beyond the outdated approach of resolving the challenges facing us case by case. That is why Madagascar must support all the efforts to implement the globalizing structural approach in the Agenda for Peace.

However, we must recognize that any initiatives in this field will be in vain if there continue to be contradictions between the diplomacy of States and the diplomacy of the United Nations, because it is quite obvious that the future of today's societies lies within a space that is broadening to encompass the dimensions of the universe.

This fundamental refocusing must be the purpose of a rational reorganization of our organs and institutions, which, given the social, political and economic conditions prevailing when they were established, now have limitations, gaps and shortcomings when it comes to responding to the expectations of today's world.

In Madagascar's view, what is needed is, first, to enlarge the Security Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution in order to ensure the democratization of international relations. Secondly, the General Assembly must be given greater means, and especially more powers, to put an end to the old cliché that this organ is merely a forum for rhetoric and orotund speechmaking. Thirdly, as indicated in "An Agenda for Peace," there must be a considerable strengthening of the mechanisms for the pacific settlement of disputes set forth in Chapter VI of the Charter, which would seem in practice to have become the poor relation of Chapter VII, with its authorization of the use of force as a last resort. Indeed, in this connection, I would make so bold as to say that any and all reform of the United Nations must also entail more careful attention to the provisions of Chapter VII.

This strengthening should include giving first priority in United Nations bodies to the prevention of violence by developing a policy and strategy centred on development. There, the General Assembly could play a more important role, in conjunction with the Security Council, by, for example, in the framework of re-establishing peace, strengthening the role of United Nations forces used as buffers in international, ethnic or civil conflicts. Paragraph 7 of Article 2 of the Charter expressly excludes any intervention in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. The settlement of national conflicts, which falls within the competence of the United Nations and which still requires the support of the country concerned, must be viewed as the carrying out of efforts to establish democracy and the rule of law and to inculcate a spirit of tolerance and non-violence.

There is also the question of strengthening regional structures for the peaceful settlement of disputes, such as those that already exist within the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Non-Aligned Movement. Lastly, there is the question of strengthening regional cooperation in the sphere of disarmament so as to block the uncontrolled movements of weapons and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

It is in this spirit that Madagascar supported the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and is about to ratify various international conventions, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons.

In the economic and social sphere, there is no need to stress that world development also presents a scenario of contrasts and disparities, whereas there had been

reason to hope that the post-cold-war period would see a de facto mobilization of the international community in support of development. Even worse, the outlook is far from encouraging. Poverty and hardship have become endemic in the so-called fourth world — the "storm zones", to use an expression borrowed from the jargon of today's experts — which is also prey to natural disasters in addition to its internal problems, resulting from political instability and imbalanced economies. The balance of payments continues to show a deficit because of the crushing burden of external debt and the fluctuations in the prices of raw materials, accompanied by — to cap it all — a stagnation and even a decline in development assistance.

We are also witnessing various forms of protectionism in the countries of the North, while the countries of the South are being urged to liberalize trade. The result is increased marginalization of the poor countries, which are deriving absolutely no benefit from the globalization of the world economy, and increased social disparities both between and within nations. That adverse trend is leading to the formation of an international social apartheid.

In the United Nations, the establishment of the Economic and Social Council embodied the poor countries' hopes for recovery, but it has become clear that its administrative machinery is still cumbersome and unsuited to its task. It has gradually become paralysed by the multiplication of its organs, without any real follow-up or control, and its high operating cost. At last July's session of the Council in Geneva, emphasis was put on the need to give it greater vigour by strengthening its competencies and powers.

If development is today recognized as a human right, Madagascar believes that that it is largely thanks to the United Nations, which has advanced the notion of interdependence between economic development, democracy and respect for human rights. Therefore, one of the United Nations primary duties is to create and strengthen the institutional structure needed to implement the norms it has identified for the promotion of development. In that connection, Madagascar will participate with attention and interest in the General Assembly's debate on An Agenda for Development.

Similarly, we shall follow with interest the implementation of the proposals contained in the Communiqué of the G-7 Summit held last June in Halifax, proposals designed to promote sustainable development and better share the fruits of growth. We welcome the G-7's express offer to cooperate in formulating a new approach to international cooperation and in defining the contribution expected of the United Nations system, which is seeking through a series of world conferences — recently in Beijing, previously in Rio, Copenhagen and Vienna, and next year in Istanbul — to engage, beyond national borders, in combined, effective action against poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Those conferences are part of the attempts to renew and improve United Nations methodologies and strategies in the sphere of cooperation for development.

I cannot fail to refer to the beneficial activities in Madagascar coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme and carried out through the United Nations system of operational activities and especially by the United Nations Children's Fund. Nor must I forget the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Population Fund, whose mid-term review of the third country programme with Madagascar was completed at the end of August.

In the same context we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative on a steering committee to prepare specific short-term and medium-term projects for the development of Africa in such priority areas as food security, the strengthening of institutions, the development of the private sector, desertification and social development.

The viability and survival of our planet depend, beyond cooperation, on our ability to adapt to the new realities and constraints we face. As we approach 1996, declared by the General Assembly as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, my delegation wanted today briefly to outline some of the proposals my country is presenting to contribute to making the dreams of the founding fathers of the Charter come true, although we know full well that our proposals are incomplete and that even an improved and ideal United Nations would be unable on its own to solve all the problems before it.

The building of a better world, to which we all aspire, remains dependent on establishing international relations based on the principle of cooperation and solidarity and on respect for the principles and norms that govern international relations.

In that connection, let me conclude by noting a great step forward in international relations: on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Organization, speakers in

this Hall stressed the concept of the balance of forces in general and of strategic nuclear parity in particular, while today, 10 years later, we all recognize that security and peace cannot exist without cooperation and solidarity, and in the absence of all violence.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call next on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Abdulkarim Al-Eryani.

Mr. Al-Eryani (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Permit me at the outset warmly to congratulate Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. His election to the presidency of this important session reflects special appreciation for his well-known diplomatic skills. It also reflects his country's role in and contribution to the international community and to consolidating its security and stability in line with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Nor can I fail today warmly to thank His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy for his judicious management of the work of the General Assembly during its last session, and for his tireless role in restructuring the United Nations and democratizing its practices.

Similarly, I should like to reaffirm my country's appreciation of the role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and of his indefatigable, invaluable work for international peace and security. We particularly commend the Secretary-General's two reports, the Agendas for Peace and for Development, which constitute central pillars of the new international relations.

This session takes place half a century after the founding of the United Nations. It therefore behoves us to pause for reflection on how the Organization has developed over the past five decades, for identifying positive and negative developments over that period and for working towards promoting the positive elements. We must steer the Organization in new directions that would spare us the negative elements which accompanied the progress of the Organization in the past.

Proceeding from this, the Republic of Yemen supports the efforts aimed at developing the Organization's machineries and principal organs in order for it to be able to rise to the challenges of the twenty-first century. My country, therefore, welcomes the introduction of structural reforms, especially with regard to expanding Security Council membership to reflect more accurately the new realities and recent changes in international relations, while observing the principles of equitable representation and geographical distribution and ensuring transparency in the Council's work. My country is confident that these required reforms, when introduced, will contribute to the emergence of new international relationships that would be characterized by right, justice and equality.

There is no doubt that the international conferences the World has witnessed since the end of the cold war on social, environmental and women's issues, have been important steps taken by the United Nations towards shaping a new, integrated system with human development as its goal, in order to develop a new way of life, ensure the future of the human race, establish the foundations of equitable and sustainable development and work towards eliminating the spectres of poverty, ignorance and disease, dangers which continue to threaten hundreds of millions of the world's inhabitants.

In this context, my country wishes to express its satisfaction with the work carried out by the Committee on the Indian Ocean to make that region a zone of peace. We call upon States members of the Security Council, maritime users of the Indian Ocean and littoral countries to participate in the work of the Committee in view of the positive contribution it is making towards strengthening peace, security, stability and cooperation in the region, in the light of General Assembly resolutions 48/82 and 49/82.

There is no doubt that the world at the end of the twentieth century is vastly different from what it was in the past. Many fundamental concepts of peace, development and security are changing, side by side with the developments that are taking place in international relations. In the light of these changes, everyone is becoming increasingly aware that human development should become the focus of the activities of the United Nations systems with a view to narrowing the gap between North and South, and to promoting economic and social integration on the basis of the common interests of States.

If any achievement is to be made in this area, we will need to rely upon international economic cooperation in facing up to such international problems as mitigating poverty and eradicating famine from developing countries, especially the least developed among them. In this context, my country calls upon the international

community to commit itself to implementing the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/206 of 1990. My country also welcomes the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the conclusion of the 1994 GATT agreements, which aim at enhancing integration, promoting equitable cooperation in trade relations and reducing the intensity of unfair competition between different societies.

The tragic situation of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been the focus of the international community's attention. It has become clear that international efforts in that region have not succeeded due to the absence of a genuine desire to put paid to the horrific massacring of defenceless civilians in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Bosnian Serbs, in open defiance of the international will. Therefore, my country considers it imperative that the Security Council should hasten to lift the weapons embargo in order for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be able to exercise the right of self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. It is not acceptable, in today's world, that we should stand as spectators under whose eyes a tyrannical minority is allowed to impose by force its will over the majority's legitimate rights. While the Republic of Yemen welcomes the peace efforts that are being deployed with a view to putting an end to the suffering of the Muslim people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it hopes for a concerted international effort to find a just solution, which would guarantee the freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and ensure the continued provision of humanitarian assistance.

The Middle East has witnessed developments which could represent an historical turning-point in the lives of the peoples of the region, and could thereby reduce the intensity of hotbeds of tension that threaten international security and stability. Special mention should be made of the positive gains made on the Palestinian-Israeli track, which resulted in the signing in Washington last year of the Agreement on the transitional period, and the recent Taba Agreement on the expansion of Palestinian autonomy. My country looks forward to the day when the Palestinian people will enjoy their full rights and establish their State on their own territory, with Holy Al-Quds as its capital. Despite the tangible progress made on the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks, we stress that just and lasting peace will remain contingent upon complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, particularly the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon, in accordance with United Nations resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and in line with the principle of land for peace, on the basis of which the Madrid conference was held in October 1991.

The civil war in Somalia and the tensions in the Horn of Africa which have exceeded the bounds of logic and reason, have caused serious trouble to the neighbouring countries, and will cause endless social problems. The perpetuation of the situation of disruption, confusion and infighting in Somalia is a source of grave concern to us all. Given Yemen's Arab, regional and humanitarian obligations, it has suffered and continues to suffer the consequences of the war in Somalia. We have borne the burden of receiving and accommodating tens of thousands of refugees, but our ability to continue to do so will depend on whether or not the concerted efforts of the international community and the international and regional organizations will put an end to the suffering of the Somali people and stop the infighting between the warring factions. A solution to this tragic situation must be found and what has been destroyed by the war must be rebuilt, in order for the Somali people to resume a normal way of life.

Mr. Jaddoo (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While my country affirms that Iraq should complete implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and cooperate fully with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to clear up the problem of missing persons and prisoners, it reiterates that Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity should not be infringed and that there should not be any interference in its internal affairs under any pretext. Yemen also repeats its call for the lifting of the economic sanctions against Iraq, in order to mitigate the suffering of the Iraqi people. This should be done without any devious interpretations of the resolutions of international legality and without the imposition of any new conditions relating to the nature of the political system, as this is a purely Iraqi matter that should be decided only the Iraqi people themselves. The Republic of Yemen wishes to express its satisfaction with the declaration made by Iraq to the Security Council, and made during the Organization's Envoy's recent visits to Iraq, that Iraq is prepared to cooperate with the international inspection team.

The Republic of Yemen urges the international community and the Security Council to push for an end to the air blockade and other measures imposed against

Libya, in response to the resolutions and decisions of the regional Organization in relation to the dispute, and in response to the positive initiatives calling for dialogue and negotiations.

The Republic of Yemen also renews its appeal to its brethren in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates to reach a peaceful settlement to the problem of the three islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Moussa — in accordance with the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the principle of good-neighbourliness and the precepts and principles of international law.

The continued acquisition by the world of weapons of mass destruction, endangers international security and stability and obstructs the search for solutions to the problems of development. Disarmament and the channelling of a portion of military expenditure to development must be as fundamental steps towards the consolidation of international security and stability.

Peace and development are two concomitant essentials for the life of man and should lie at the heart of United Nations future activities at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

In this context, my country commends the achievements of the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in April 1995. However, the success of the resolutions adopted by this Conference will depend on the extent of commitment by all States to the contents of those resolutions, the affirmation of the universal dimension of the treaty and its full, not its limited implementation on the regional level, particularly in the Middle East. That will strengthen the legal force of the Treaty, and create the appropriate climate for the functioning of the institutions and mechanisms which will play a principal and important role in the process of its implementation.

The Republic of Yemen, having achieved reunification on 22 May 1990, and having firmly consolidated the foundations of this unity through the triumph of our people over the separatist conspiracy on 7 July 1994, is now engaged in strengthening its democratic approach of political pluralism, respect for human rights and freedom of the press. Yemen is also engaged in effecting economic reforms that would enable it to achieve the qualitative transformations required by Yemeni Society in the economic life of the country, such as restructuring the national economy. This will make Yemen a force for peace and stability in the region, and enable it to contribute more effectively to the maintenance of international security and stability.

As Yemen is one of the least developed countries, and in view of the damage done to its national economy by the separatist attempt, we hope that the international community will increase its support and assistance, in order to enable us to rebuild our social and economic structures and rid ourselves of the effects of the failed attempt.

In the context of our foreign policy approach of dialogue and the settlement of problems by peaceful means, my country has resolved its border question with the fraternal Sultanate of Oman, and is in the process, with the same degree of sincerity and seriousness, of seeking a settlement to the border problem with the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through the work of joint committees, on the basis of the principles contained in the Memorandum of Understanding signed in Holy Mecca on 26 February 1995.

The Republic of Yemen, as a member of the international community, has always performed and will continue to perform its humanitarian role in the framework of the United Nations. It will spare no effort in effectively participating with the international community in working for the maintenance of international peace and security. Let us then make this session a new point of departure, towards the renewal of the concepts of inter-State relations, and towards making our Organization a universal arbiter.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, His Excellency Mr. Petros Solomon.

Mr. Solomon (Eritrea): Allow me first to congratulate Mr. Freitas do Amaral on his election as the President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. My Government is convinced that the wealth of his experience and abilities will prove vital at this crucial crossroads as we search for new and innovative mechanisms and structures to enhance the effectiveness of our Organization to meet the challenges of the coming century.

Allow me also to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, for the ability and

commitment that he showed in presiding over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

We further wish to express our profound appreciation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and to commend him for his untiring efforts to ensure the effectiveness of our Organization.

The multifaceted challenges that our global community will continue to face in the period ahead, and the opportunities that exist — more than at any time in the past — to promote equity and justice in a more harmonious world will require a thorough review of paradigms, methods and institutions that have functioned for the past 50 years. Indeed, different realities from those now prevailing inspired the founding of the United Nations in 1945 and shaped its operational mechanisms in the subsequent decades. The situation now is very much changed, if not altogether new.

The membership of the Organization itself has undergone phenomenal change to increase almost fourfold. Moreover, while the threat of a major international confrontation has receded with the end of the cold war, a host of other problems, including an upsurge in inter-State conflicts, international terrorism, growing poverty and marginalization of vast segments of humanity in the developing countries as well as within affluent societies, are coming to the fore. It is apparent that these problems and realities will require novel theoretical and institutional approaches.

It is in this context that my Government welcomes the debates that have been provoked by the recommendations of the independent working committee and other interested parties on the future of the United Nations. Let me further underline that, as one of the new Member countries of the United Nations, we are gratified to rejoin the world community of States and impart our views on its future, especially as we have had the added advantage of gauging its operations from without for most of the past 50 years.

We share the view of many Member States on the imperative of restructuring the decision-making bodies of the United Nations — particularly the Security Council, in a manner that ensures adequate representation of its diverse components and interests. The process of restructuring should not, moreover, consist of mere enlargement through the inclusion of a number of potential candidates as permanent members through some selection criteria of financial and economic clout, population size and other similar factors. As we all agree, the issue is more profound and transcends a simple numbers game. We hold that serious thought must be given to devising a suitable arrangement that guarantees the proper representation of our global community in its rich diversity and that is amenable to periodic adjustments to accommodate inevitable changes in a dynamic world.

In the same vein, we welcome the emerging consensus over rationalizing the development agencies and institutions of the United Nations by eliminating overlapping functions and mandates, and integrating these institutions into more powerful and authoritative bodies. The numerous platforms unanimously adopted at the international Summits in Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing, aimed at environmental preservation, the reduction and elimination of poverty, and the empowerment of women, cannot be realized without the concerted efforts of these enhanced institutions. The new drive towards their increased integration is therefore both appropriate and timely.

None of these ideals can come to fruition without the essential prerequisite of peace. Representing a nation and people that have suffered the agonies of war and conflict for almost the entire lifetime of this Organization, my Government cannot underrate the efforts and priorities that the United Nations must accord to the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Past failures and inadequacies can only reinforce the collective resolve of our global community to check forces of aggression and destabilization and not to let down wronged parties.

And yet we cannot hide our disappointment at the indecision and wavering we see over sending clear signals to defuse potential time-bombs and conflicts that are brewing. The age-old folly of arming belligerent and aggressor States in pursuit of narrow commercial and other mundane interests continues unabated. This anomalous left-over of the cold-war years must surely be rectified, as it is the first step that we must take in our quest for global peace and as we devise elaborate mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

If I have dwelt somewhat at length on what we aspire to see in the invigorated Organization in the decades to come, this is due to my sincere belief that the tone we set here collectively will have far greater influence in shaping the future of our planet than the isolated measures and endeavours we undertake in our individual countries.

Allow me now, to briefly touch on issues of direct importance to my country and our subregion. After three decades of agonizing war, my Government is today fully engaged in healing the wounds of war, rehabilitating a devastated country and institutionalizing the rule of law. The constitution-drafting process, hinged on popular participation in all its phases, is progressing at a satisfactory pace and according to the schedule envisaged.

We are also doing our utmost to contribute, together with our sisterly partners, to the creation of a climate conducive to subregional cooperation and collective security on our part of the continent, which has seen much turmoil and commotion in the past. The precarious situation in Somalia and the problems posed by the destabilizing policies pursued by the National Islamic Front (NIF) regime in the Sudan only indicate the enormity of the tasks, which need persistent and concerted efforts by all regional and international actors concerned.

The recent document signed in regard to the implementation of the second phase of the peace agreement between the Palestinian and Israeli parties can only inspire confidence in all of us that this long-drawn-out conflict is heading towards a satisfactory resolution at long last. We trust that these measures will contribute towards a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

In conclusion, I wish to restate our firm belief and hopes that our Organization will find the insight and inner strength to reinvigorate itself to meet the challenges of the next century. I can only reiterate my Government's firm commitment to play its small and modest part to advance the ideals that bind us together.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.